

## CHAPTER 2

### No Horses, No Wagons

While I was home I received a letter from Dr. Dodd which changed the course of my life. He asked if I would be willing to be loaned for a few months to the Presbyterian Board of National Missions. Miss Anna Scott of the Board had turned to him for help. They desperately needed a woman doctor who could be sent to help Dr. Sarah Bowen in New Mexico. I was the only one who fit the requirements—a woman doctor who at that particular moment was free to go and, as an added bonus, was trained in obstetrics. He was reluctant to loan me for he realized that I might decide to stay with National Missions and thus be lost to him for service in the Foreign Field. It would definitely be a temporary assignment, and he was willing to risk the loan if I were willing to go.

I had never heard of Dr. Bowen and her work in New Mexico. I *did not want to go* there. I wanted to return to New York and pursue my training in Obstetrics and Gynecology. At the same time, I felt I should go. After several days of indecision, thought, and prayer, I decided I would go to New Mexico, *but only for five months!*

Mother was ecstatic! She had met Dr. Bowen and heard her speak at a National Meeting of Presbyterian Women. She had been tremendously impressed and thought that my

working with Dr. Bowen would be absolutely marvelous. Dad went to the train station to purchase my one-way ticket to Santa Fe. It was the first ticket to Santa Fe the agent had sold, and it took him quite a while to figure it out. When he announced that the Santa Fe Railroad did not go to Santa Fe, Dad began to have second thoughts about letting me go.

Aunt Kit Granger, who had never approved of my going into medicine, was sure that going to New Mexico would seal my fate of living and dying an old maid. To her this would be a fate worse than death. Uncle Arthur Granger tried to dissuade me from this wild adventure by promising that if I would just stay home and get married, he would give me a dozen chickens and a heifer. He was careful to pronounce that "hifer" with a long "i" in imitation of an error I had once made, much to his amusement. Several years later he made good this promise, but I will save that story for later.

My family and I knew nothing about New Mexico. From looking at the map we thought winters there would be mild. Luckily, a few days before I was to set out, Uncle Arthur happened to talk to a man who had been to Taos. (He pronounced it to rhyme with "chaos.") The man said that because of the altitude, northern New Mexico winters could be cold. So, dressed in winter clothes and equipped with a fur coat, I set out for the wild and wooly west.

Mother had served a steak dinner (my favorite entree) for my last meal at home. Aunt Kit and Uncle Arthur were guests. Around 7:30 p.m., Mother and Dad, my sister, Kay,

Dado (my stepmother's father), and Aunt Kit and Uncle Arthur all escorted me to the train station in Cedar Rapids to see me off. There were no tears.

As the train rushed along, I thought about Miss Scott's letter. My predecessor at Dixon had arrived with golf clubs and tennis racquets and had stayed only a few weeks. Miss Scott was anxious to avoid a repetition of that disappointment, and she had gone to great lengths to try to make me aware of what I would encounter.

She had written that living conditions were primitive. I would live in an adobe mud house without electricity or running water. The house would be simply furnished. I would eat simple food. She said the hospital was small and lacked modern conveniences. I would be expected to do a lot with very little.

An adobe house! A house made of mud! To an Iowan that was bad news. Would the house wash away with the first big rain like a house in Iowa would? How primitive is simple? Would my bed be a pile of skins or ticking full of corn husks on the floor? Would I have to subsist on beans and pot likker? Would I have to make the trip from Santa Fe to Dixon in a spring wagon with a team of horses? My thoughts ran on. . . .

There was a gradual, almost imperceptible increase in altitude as the train crossed Kansas and then a noticeable increase as we crossed the southeast corner of Colorado and came into the northern part of New Mexico. A second

engine was added to get us over the mountain pass at Raton and Glorieta. Soon we were out of the mountains with their craggy cliffs, deep ravines, and many tall evergreen trees and entered the foothills dotted here and there with scrubby pinon trees.

I had been travelling for two nights and a day—overnight on the Rock Island railroad from Cedar Rapids, Iowa to Kansas City, Missouri and then a day and a night on the Santa Fe from Kansas City to Lamy. Around 8:30 a.m. the train reached Lamy, New Mexico, and all the Santa Fe bound passengers got off and boarded a bus for the ride through the foothills and up the mesa to Santa Fe.

It was February 8, 1939.

As I got off the bus in Santa Fe, I looked but saw no wagons and no horses. Dr. Bowen was there to meet me. She was driving an almost new, beautiful, dark blue Chevrolet coupe. She had snappy brown eyes and auburn hair, worn in a braid which stood up on top of her head in the manner of a Spanish mantilla comb. Dr. Bowen was wearing an elegant full length reddish brown caracul fur coat. She had a firm handshake and a marvelous smile. I liked her immediately.

I was pleased when she said we would go to La Fonda for breakfast. This was Santa Fe's leading hotel, and a fellow train passenger had told me about it. It was a charming old tan plastered adobe building in Indian pueblo style built around a central open patio. The roof-line was quite uneven

because the building varied in height anywhere from one story to five. There were several towers and many protruding vigas (roof beams made of round logs). The exterior of the main entrance was in the style of a Spanish mission church with two little towers on either side of big double doors. Inside, the floors were of highly polished flagstone. Some of the light fixtures were of tin with pierced work designs. Other fixtures had parchment shades with Indian motif designs. A wide, covered gallery encircled the patio. At the far side of the gallery there was a fire in a gigantic fireplace. The atmosphere was casual and relaxed but very "high-toned."

After a delicious breakfast of orange juice, sweet rolls, and marvelous coffee, we drove around on some errands. I was to find out that errands were always a big part of any trip into town. Some would be for the hospital and many would be personal errands for the staff. My impression of Santa Fe that day was that it was a "hicky" dusty town of perhaps two or three thousand people. Actually the population was about ten thousand, and it was and is the state capital.

We made a brief stop at Allison-James School (the Presbyterian Mission Coeducational Junior High Boarding School) so I could meet the principal, Mr. Joseph Poncel. Then we were off to Dixon under a cloudless blue sky and in beautiful bright sunshine. It was a far cry from the gray overcast February skies in the east and midwest.